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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

THE PULPIT AND THE WAR.

THE relation of the pulpit to the events of contemporary experience has always presented a question which has divided the sentiment of the Christian Church. Those who have felt that the pulpit should deal freely and explicitly with such issues, in order that the Church might have its influence upon contemporary life, have often been forced to realize that the discussion of "current events" has sometimes resulted in a pulpit sensationalism that has robbed the Church of all serious influence whatever. On the other hand, those who have demanded a policy of reticence and aloofness, in the interest of the seriousness and weight of the Church's leadership, have often become so sensitive of practical applications that the Church is handed over to an experience of solitary detachment from the affairs of this present world; and she becomes nothing but an institutional generality—with a vague gospel about the "sinfulness of sin." In each case there is a total or partial loss of the very end which is held in view. The course which is advised in the interest of the influence of the pulpit contributes directly to the sacrifice of the social helpfulness of the Church.

This is a time when the pertinence of such considerations should be kept carefully and sacredly in mind. The present war is, in the clearest and noblest sense, the opportunity of the Church. It is the opportunity of the Church because it is the trial of the nation; a trial that will bring its strain not only to our military and financial equipment, but to the moral resources of the country. The results of such a conflict as the present are often, and in the long run, more essentially disastrous for the victors than for the vanquished. There is danger, as we proceed, that the real charges and the serious reasons of warfare will drop into the background, and that our military feeling will degenerate into a passion for spoil and a lust for mastery that will leave us, at the end, further than ever from the goal of our national aspiration. As time goes on, we may forget those considerations of humanity and those sentiments of international compassion which have moved us to intervene. We may forget our interests in Cuba in our rancour against the Spaniard; we may forget our interests in peace in that increasing thirst for domination which always comes with the success of arms; and the close of this struggle may find us, in consequence of all this, a little further from the spirit of compassion and from the proper genius of civilization than we were at the beginning. If this be so, neither Cuba nor America nor the world will be any the happier for this war. We need the elevation of the military ideal; we need to be constantly and seriously reminded of the real reasons for American intervention; we need to have it

impressed upon us, in all wise and practicable ways, that this war is a war in the interest of peace; and who is to do all this? The yellow journalism will not do it. It will do all that may be done against it. We may depend upon the conservative press; we may depend upon the spirit and influence of our American homes; and upon the natural genius of our people; but we should also be able to depend upon the influence of the pulpit of the Christian Church. It is an hour for tact and judgment, for soundness of mind, for the prayerful and deliberate weighing of words. At the time of such a crisis in the development of the national character the privilege of service will be missed by the pulpit which speaks not at all; and it will be even more conspicuously missed by the pulpit that speaks with irresponsible and clamorous facility. But that privilege will be nobly and wisely used by the pulpit which shall speak—not to arouse excitement, but to purify and dignify the military passion of the moment.

EDGAR GARDNER MURPHY.

REHABILITATED LEGISLATIVE UPPER CHAMBERS.

THERE is a striking parallel between the position of the House of Lords in the eighties, as compared with its position at the present time, and the present position of the Canadian Senate as compared with its position before the overturn in the constituencies at the Dominion General Election of 1896 which defeated the Tupper Government and placed the Laurier Government in office. Then, to all intents and purposes, the Senate at Ottawa was the most obviously useless legislative chamber in existence. Of its seventy-eight nominated members, all appointed for life, not more than ten were Liberals; and for seventeen or eighteen years the Senate had had a most insignificant and docile part in Dominion politics. It had done nothing but say ditto to the successive Conservative governments, headed by the late Sir John Macdonald, the late Sir J. C. Abbott, the late Sir John Thompson, Sir Mackenzie Bowell, and Sir Charles Tupper.

Except for the work the Senate discharges as a court in which divorce suits are tried, it might have dropped out of existence any time between 1878 and 1896 without causing even a jar in the legislative machinery of the Dominion. The public cared so little about it that the newspapers, Conservative as well as Liberal, usually ignored its debates. The Canadian editors would not trouble to tell off members of their Parliamentary staffs to report its proceedings. The Senate would have dropped into oblivion so far as the newspapers were concerned had it not drawn upon its contingent expenses fund for a reporter to attend its sittings and hand his reports to the Ottawa correspondents, free of cost to the newspaper publishers. This plan in the closing years of the Conservative regime alone saved the Senate from going unreported; and even with this plan and with the reports of the Senate costing the newspapers nothing, usually only the barest mention of the proceedings in the Senate found its way into the Canadian newspapers. The "stuff" coming from the Senate, to use the jargon of newspaper offices, was not regarded as worth the cost of telegraphing. Visitors seldom were seen in the Senate gallery; and so little of the Senate's proceedings were made public in the press, that up to 1897 it is doubtful if one Canadian in fifty could name ten of the seventy odd Senators.